

## U.S. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION GETTING IT RIGHT

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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GETTING IT RIGHT**

by

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## ABSTRACT

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The United States is engaged in open conflict in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other places around the world in its effort to combat terrorist insurgents. Its “hard” power is unequalled. But its use of “soft” power in the everyday ideological battlefield of the mind is unimpressive, suffering from a lack of organization and unity of effort. Effective integration of words and action across the foreign policy spectrum is still lacking despite the release of the 2007 *U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication*. The U.S. Government is simply not organized to perform effective strategic communication. Attempts to direct this effort have been unproductive because of the absence of an overarching policy combined with an independent center with a director who answers directly to the President. Furthermore, the principal United States entity capable of influencing foreign audiences is preoccupied with maintaining its “firewall” and journalistic integrity as it broadcasts the news it chooses. This SRP elaborates on the issues of strategic communication and recommends ways to strengthen this component of national security.



## U.S. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION: GETTING IT RIGHT

Public relations was invented in the United States, yet we are miserable at communicating to the rest of the world what we are about as a society and a culture, about freedom and democracy, about our policies and our goals. It is just plain embarrassing that al-Qaeda is better at communicating its message on the internet than America.

—Robert M. Gates  
Secretary of Defense

The above quote by Secretary Gates underscores the frustration United States policymakers have experienced with regard to the conduct of strategic communication by the U.S. Government. Terrorist adversaries seemingly enjoy greater success in reaching and influencing their target audiences than does the United States with its vast resources. Additionally, terrorist organizations seem to use modern communication tools more effectively than the U.S. Government to disseminate their propaganda messages to the global community.

The salient fact is that the United States is not organized to effectively conduct strategic communication. It lacks effective long-term leadership. It also suffers from confusion about just what exactly is strategic communication. Some believe it is nothing more than public relations or advertising, while others see it as a way to communicate values and ideals. And, it is inadequately funded to perform its mission.

The U.S. Government can improve its ability to conduct strategic communication by making hard choices about what messages need to be communicated, and how to do it. And while terrorist use of modern communications cannot be ignored or stopped, its effects can be mitigated and countered by effective United States strategic communication. To this end, the U.S. Government should lead, fund and organize to achieve the essential unity of effort demanded by this important endeavor.

## Strategic Communication or Public Diplomacy

While there are many reasons for the U.S. Government's shortfall in conducting effective strategic communication, the first and most important may be definitional, according to Dr. Linton Wells at the National Defense University. Dr. Wells noted during a 2007 Congressional hearing that the Department of Defense's definition does not necessarily align with the Department of State's generally accepted understanding of strategic communication as a subset of public diplomacy. He asserts that, until there is some agreement on this fundamental issue, conducting effective strategic communication will be difficult.<sup>1</sup>

Representative Mac Thornberry expressed his frustration about this definitional issue more succinctly when he declared during the same 2007 House Armed Services Committee hearing that:

Strategic Communication is not marketing; it is not simplistic slogans; it is not simply looking for better ways to tell the world how good we are. Strategic Communication is deeper and more sophisticated than that. It is how we communicate with – and thus relate to – the rest of the world.<sup>2</sup>

Two of the U.S. Government's main practitioners of strategic communication, however defined, are the Department's of State and Defense. And although a National Security Council (NSC) policy coordinating committee for strategic communication was established in 2002, with the Department of State designated as lead agency, the NSC's accomplishments, with regard to strategic communication, are unremarkable.<sup>3</sup> For example, the committee took five years to issue a National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication which then included unfunded mandates for

the participating departments and agencies for everything up and to and including assessments of any progress.<sup>4</sup>

Public Diplomacy, as previously noted, is considered to be a subset of strategic communication at the Department of State. It involves “overt international public information activities of the U.S. Government designed to promote U.S. foreign policy objectives by seeking to understand, inform, and influence foreign audiences and opinion makers, and by broadening the dialogue between American citizens and institutions and their counterparts abroad.”<sup>5</sup>

The Department of State thus considers “Strategic Communication” to be within the realm of “Public Diplomacy.” During her July 2005 confirmation hearing for Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Karen Hughes said she would be guided by four strategic pillars: engagement, exchanges, education and empowerment. But she emphasized that she would represent American values as the central thrust of her public diplomacy efforts, citing “a generational and global struggle of ideas.”<sup>6</sup>

Department of Defense (DoD) Joint Publication 5.0 defines “Strategic Communication” as “focused United States Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of United States Government interests, policies and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power.” Information operations and public affairs are principally used to support military activities.<sup>7</sup>

The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Report appropriately refines this definition further by noting:

Effective communication must build and maintain credibility and trust with friends and foes alike, through an emphasis on consistency, veracity and transparency both in words and deeds. Such credibility is essential to building trusted networks that counter ideological support for terrorism. Responsibility for strategic communication must be government-wide and the QDR supports efforts led by the Department of State to improve integration of this vital element of national power into strategies across the Federal Government.<sup>8</sup>

Thus the QDR underscores the importance of combining words and deeds to accomplish effective strategic communication. This is an important point, since most references to strategic communication tend to refer to messages and themes as if this activity is nothing more than public affairs “on steroids” or mundane advertising efforts. Indeed, the administration’s initial reliance on marketing executive Charlotte Beers for its early public diplomacy effort quickly revealed that selling Coca-Cola is easier than changing perceptions and attitudes.<sup>9</sup>

Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes understood this distinction and advocated the “diplomacy of deeds” in the long-awaited National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication which was released in 2007, just seven months before her departure. According to Under Secretary Hughes, this strategy represented the collective efforts of the interagency policy coordinating committee on strategic communication. The strategy directs agencies and embassies to “more aggressively tell the story” of how American programs are helping people’s lives around the world every day. Unfortunately, it neither identifies nor provides funding for this important national effort.<sup>10</sup>

Richard Halloran, writing for the Army’s Strategic Studies Institute, clearly emphasized the connection of actions with words by noting that strategic communication even “subsumes speechwriting for the President...includes public

diplomacy and information operations” and that it must incorporate intelligence to be effective in the “war of ideas.” Incorporation of actions or deeds with words is vital.<sup>11</sup>

According to Dr. Wells, this concept of connecting “deeds with words” is an essential component of effective strategic communication. What's more, he says the U.S. Government should work to synchronize its words with its actions for our strategic communication to be truly effective – a concept advocated by the National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication. He pointedly reminds us that the U.S. Government is also not the sole purveyor of messages representing the United States. The media and entertainment industry are also powerful forces for conveying U.S. values and ideals to foreign hearts and minds.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, Dr. Wells notes his belief that a “single integrated top-down process will not work” because of the dynamic information environment within which such communications typically occur.<sup>13</sup> However, from a sensible, if not only from a planning perspective, there has to be some overarching direction that focuses official strategic communication efforts and assures a degree of unity in our efforts for there to be any hope for success.<sup>14</sup> The military have long employed a successful concept of centralized planning with decentralized execution. This concept could serve as a model for the conduct of the U.S. national strategic communication effort.

### Terrorist Use of Modern Communications

Terrorist and insurgent organizations seem to use modern communication tools more effectively than the U.S. Government to disseminate their propaganda messages to the global community. This is not a new phenomenon. According to T. E. Lawrence,

of “Lawrence of Arabia” fame, “The printing press is the greatest weapon in the armoury [sic] of the modern [insurgent] commander.”<sup>15</sup>

Al-Qaeda, considered by the current Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Support to Public Diplomacy Michael Doran to be the “ideological organization par excellence,” recognizes that “more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media. We are in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of the Umma [Muslims].” This reference to the media “battlefield” by insurgent and terrorist organizations is commonplace. Moreover, modern communications, especially the internet, have supplanted the 1920’s era printing press and make such communications more effective. It also becomes more difficult to counter lies posted on websites unless a way can be found to lure visitors who typically visit such websites to other sites to counter the lies found on the first site.<sup>16</sup>

Former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld often noted that “a lie can be half way around the world before the truth has its boots on.” And although there is an urgent need to counter the lies and untruths issued by terrorists and insurgents, the U.S. Government must strive to be truthful, as well as timely, if it is to maintain the moral high ground.<sup>17</sup>

The U.S. Government’s strategic communication effort is too fragmented and suffers from a lack of decisive leadership with enough authority to make changes and manage the process. That it operates at all is a testament to the commitment of those who do it. It is difficult to counter 24/7 terrorist media efforts in the digital world with the current U.S. Government hierarchical and cautious public affairs structure.<sup>18</sup>

One solution recently proposed by Army Lieutenant General William B. Caldwell, Commanding General, U.S. Army Combined Arms Center and Fort Leavenworth, is to allow soldiers to post videos on YouTube and blog about activities to counter the adaptive enemy culture that frequently posts videos of their attacks on the internet. Caldwell asserts that the first video posted becomes “reality to viewers.” But Caldwell correctly notes the military “zero defects” culture must change and occasional mistakes should be tolerated if his approach is to be accepted.<sup>19</sup>

However, permitting such an uncontrolled approach to strategic communication is perilous, since every communication in today’s electronic age really is a strategic communication. Moreover, such free-wheeling communication carries with it the risk of another *Abu Ghraib*, which incited such a serious backlash against the U.S. throughout the Arab world.

Jihadists are media-savvy. They focus on using visual media to propagandize, recruit, and raise funds. The current generation learned to videotape terrorist attacks from Hezbollah in Israel and Lebanon. “Video allows for the use of selective editing and misleading voiceovers,” according to a 2004 Joint Military Intelligence College discussion paper.<sup>20</sup> And this is not a recent development.

In the early 1990s, Devrimci Sol, a Turkish Marxist terrorist organization also known as DHKP/C, published its manifestos and other propaganda on their website, publicized their successes and raised funds before the U.S. Embassy in Ankara or its consulate in Istanbul even had its own internet connection available on its unclassified net for its security staff to use. In keeping with the times, Devrimci Sol now distributes their videos on YouTube.<sup>21</sup>

Today, Al-Qaeda copies and edits Western news footage of “oppressed” Muslims to help incite rage and anger against the West. Their “voiceovers” typically bear no resemblance to what was actually said in the original news broadcast, since they make no pretense of being truthful. But these videos are persuasive.

Al-Qaeda similarly films its “victories” in Afghanistan, Chechnya, and elsewhere – quickly posting them to their internet websites to create the illusion of endless successes, but without depicting their losses or the “full extent of the fighting.” The *Economist* drives home this propagandist ploy by noting:

Battlefield footage of American Humvees being blown up to shouts of "Allahu Akbar!" (God is Great) appear on the internet within minutes of the attacks taking place. The most popular scenes are often compiled into films with musical soundtracks of male choirs performing songs such as "Caravans of Martyrs". Jihadists have even released a computer video game, "Night of Bush Capturing", in which participants play at shooting American soldiers and President George Bush. Inevitably, experts say, jihadists have also started to create "residents" in the virtual world of Second Life.<sup>22</sup>

Terrorists operate freely within the internet's virtual environment. Terrorist computer expert Younes Tsouli, radicalized by on-line images of the war in Iraq, operated a terrorist internet operation in West London until arrested until 2006. He used his computer expertise to reformat and post Al-Qaeda videos on the internet to boast of their successes and hopefully to radicalize others until his arrest in 2006.<sup>23</sup>

Terrorists use the internet to disseminate propaganda, raise funds, train, and perform operational planning, as described in the 2007 National Strategy for Homeland Security. The Department for Homeland Security is working to deny the internet as a safe haven to terrorists.<sup>24</sup>

Terrorists also use the Internet to radicalize and recruit, a well-documented tactic. Both the Director General of Britain's MI-5, Dame Buller, and the New York

Police Department (NYPD) have stated unequivocally that terrorist organizations use the Internet to radicalize and indoctrinate new recruits. The NYPD also noted that the Internet serves as an “anonymous virtual meeting place” for these jihadi recruits.<sup>25</sup>

The politically motivated outcome of the first battle of Fallujah in Iraq in April 2004 was partly influenced by negative television coverage by Arabic satellite news channels Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya. They filmed dead babies in hospitals and created the carefully orchestrated illusion being that they had been killed by coalition air strikes. The Palestinian Intifada had similarly used images of blood-bespattered children and wailing mothers to inflame hatred of their Israeli enemy.<sup>26</sup>

Ironically, an unfortunate byproduct of coalition success in Iraq has been the insurgent’s ability to improve their communication network to relay and view such information. As each new internet café and cell phone tower is built in Iraq, insurgents gain a new operational node to connect with the rest of their network. This development caused General John Abizaid, Commander of U.S. Central Command, to lament at a Central Command conference in 2007 that “This enemy is better networked than we are.” Finally, Iran is known to use radio, television, and print media to influence Iraqi public opinion and help promote pro-Iranian individuals in the Iraqi government at all levels.<sup>27</sup>

### Organizing for Successful Strategic Communication

U.S. strategic communication activity is currently performed by a variety of actors with little centralized control. Moreover, the disparate elements of the U.S. Government engaged in strategic communication operate with the best of intentions, but with mixed outcomes. This is partly due to organization, but also to the absence of a guiding or

overarching philosophy. More importantly, strategic communication also “requires a commitment not yet seen” on par with the national commitment observed for “defense, intelligence, law enforcement, and homeland security.”<sup>28</sup> Former Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld critically described the overall U.S. Government strategic communication apparatus by noting it is akin to a “five and dime store in an E-Bay world.”<sup>29</sup>

Although DoD is one of the leading practitioners of strategic communication within the U.S. Government, it also does not operate from a successful organizational architecture. In fact, an internal assessment by its own Strategic Communication Integration Group in September 2007 reported the “process had been largely ineffective in producing timely, coordinated products.”<sup>30</sup> But DoD is not the lead agency in the battle for hearts and minds. The Department of State is assigned that responsibility, a fact most recently confirmed by Senator Christopher Bond (R-MO) during the 2008 intelligence threat hearings.<sup>31</sup> To that end, James Glassman, the nominee for the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, declared during his January 2008 confirmation testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, his intention, was to “focus on three areas: 1) leading the war of ideas, 2) building on our current public diplomacy strengths in educational and cultural exchanges, and 3) bringing fresh and vital technologies to bear on all of our efforts.” His predecessor, Karen Hughes, similarly said she would “represent American values as the central thrust of her public diplomacy efforts.”<sup>32</sup>

In the long-awaited U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication, Karen Hughes outlined the direction for U.S. Government outreach efforts to communicate U.S. policies, values, and ideals to the global community. This

was essentially a marketing plan, but it did broadly assign some responsibilities and specify core messages.<sup>33</sup> But it lacked a core foundational or overarching philosophy that proved so successful in spanning successive administrations during the Cold War. Unfortunately, Glassman's testimony also ignored this vital component as he described his initial intentions for his office.<sup>34</sup>

A new analog to the overarching "Cold War" philosophy promulgated by the historic NSC-68 is needed to span the short-term thinking typically held by revolving-door political appointees. Additionally, this philosophy must be simple enough so that national leaders on both sides of the political aisle can embrace its fundamental relevance since this struggle, like the Cold War, will take many years to conclude. Ambassador Paul H. Nitze described NSC-68 as having "an absolute ideological quality about it" which, considering the nature of today's conflict, would seem to be an essential component to effectively respond to the ideological challenges from terrorist media and which have proven so successful in shaping Muslim hearts and minds.<sup>35</sup>

Responsibility for the planning and conduct of U.S. strategic communication is too diffuse; it suffers from an absence of centralized direction at a sufficiently high level to make a difference. For many government agencies and departments, planning for strategic communication usually takes a back seat to the more immediate demands of day-to-day public affairs. Moreover, such planning must contend with all of the other distracters that can impede effective planning. Importantly, a successful plan must originate from a sufficiently high level to attract resources and widespread support. As a congressional budgeter once sagely noted, "Policy is what gets funded." In the 2008 U.S. Government Budget submission, the funding request for international broadcasting

amounted to approximately \$668 million. Compare that to the \$12 billion per month being spent for military operations in Iraq. By this metric alone, international broadcasting, with its potential for reaching and influencing a vast audience, is not being funded at the level it should be funded.<sup>36</sup>

Effective strategic communication requires leadership directly tied to the Executive Office of the President for it to have the authority to direct the various governmental entities conducting such communication and to ensure such activities are adequately energized and resourced. The 2008 Defense Science Board (DSB) strategic communication study affirmed this requirement by noting:

Presidents shape the nation's strategic communication in powerful ways, and they require permanent structures within the White House that will strengthen their ability to understand and communicate with global audiences.<sup>37</sup>

In its report to the Congress in 2003, the Djerejian Commission recommended the creation of a new White House office led by a “special Cabinet-level Counselor to the President” to provide “strategic direction and interagency coordination of public diplomacy.”<sup>38</sup> To ensure a long-term outlook, this new Center or Office should be led by a director with a lengthy appointment such as the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's 10-year term. This director would thus have the authority to coordinate messages, themes, and the “diplomacy of deeds” while keeping an apolitical stance. But this director must work within the Executive Office of the President. This structural stipulation is essential.

The first director of the now-abolished United States Information Agency, Edward R. Murrow, famously proclaimed that “public diplomacy should be present for the takeoff, not just the crash landings” in his insistence on being closely involved in White

House plans.<sup>39</sup> In other words, public diplomacy must be incorporated into a policy from the outset, not just be an afterthought or simply a crisis management tool to extricate a flawed policy when complications arise, as they inevitably do. The only way for that to happen in an assured manner is for the strategic communication center director to be present when the president and his advisors are discussing a policy during its initial stage.

One thing is clear: national strategic communication cannot be effectively directed by a sub-cabinet political appointee such as the State Department's Under Secretary for Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy or a similar position proposed for DoD. These individuals lack the requisite long-term perspective and authority for this important task. The 2004 reform of the Intelligence Community acknowledged a similar problem and established a Director of National Intelligence (DNI), thereby addressing a grievous gap in the 1947 National Security Act. It took nearly sixty years to rectify that organizational flaw. And even this profound change left the DNI without a fixed term of office and subject to the whims of the administration in power.<sup>40</sup> How we are perceived by and communicate with the global community is no less important. Must a similar interval occur before such a sensible development can mature within the public diplomacy establishment? We urgently need a Director of Strategic Communication with budgetary authority and access to the President to direct the U.S. Government's strategic communication.

The Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) and the relationship-based Security Coordination Integration Group (SCIG) have proven ineffective in grappling with the long-term issue of strategic communication. The PCC is directly tied to the current

political administration; it will no doubt be entirely removed with other elements of the outgoing administration on 20 January 2009. The SCIG enjoys an even more tenuous existence. And although both organizations are collaborative, they are also personality-driven entities which will lose whatever effectiveness they have accrued as their leaders and staff departs. Fundamentally, both are ad hoc affairs which are unlikely to survive the arrival of a new administration.<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, even the SCIG recognized the need for a credible director just within a single department – DoD – when it recommended the establishment of an Under Secretary or Assistant Secretary of Defense for Security Coordination.<sup>42</sup>

The DSB also recommended the establishment of “an independent, non-profit, and non-partisan Center for Global Engagement.” However, such an entity faces the very real prospect of being excluded from internal policy deliberations since presidents tend to have very partisan staffs. Further, the commercial media tend to be openly hostile to anything they view as an attempt to “manage” the press or any communications indicative of propaganda.<sup>43</sup>

The U.S. international broadcasting architecture could also be more effective in exercising our soft power. Until 1999, the United States Information Agency was America’s front-line strike force for waging the cognitive war of ideas. Its legendary Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) international broadcasting arms were a “central component of the Reagan administration’s overall strategy for confronting the global Soviet challenge.”<sup>44</sup> But in less than a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union, this successful strategic communication organization had been fully dismembered; a victim of the peace it had helped to create. Its international broadcasting

arm was spun off in 1994 to become the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG); an umbrella organization established over the seven separate surrogate broadcasting groups, including the well-known Voice of America.<sup>45</sup>

A reluctance to invest the White House with a “propaganda” organ is the only plausible explanation for the feeble DSB recommendation to create a 501(c)(3) independent corporation to oversee the process of strategic communication. Not even the Djerejian Commission made such a meager recommendation. Moreover, burying it within the State Department would deprive it of the critical access and essential long-term outlook it needs to be effective. In all likelihood, the result would be another Broadcasting Board of Governors apparently more concerned with protecting its independence and existence than with conducting effective strategic communication.<sup>46</sup>

The term “firewall” occurs frequently in any discussion about the role of the BBG and its U.S.-sponsored broadcasting services, which serve as “surrogate” news services for regions of the world deprived of a free and independent media capability. The BBG’s mission is “to promote and sustain freedom and democracy by broadcasting accurate and objective news and information about the United States and the world to audiences overseas.”<sup>47</sup>

However, this mission description does not include any active direction or control in support of public diplomacy or strategic communication. A zeal to protect the “integrity” of the journalistic process ignores the larger need of serving the needs of public diplomacy or strategic communication. The Djerejian Commission was equally critical of this inadequacy, recommending that “broadcasting must fit into the overall public diplomacy strategy.” The Commission then advised Congress to make

appropriate changes to the BBG's legislative construct.<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, this BBG "firewall" is both permeable and impermeable, depending only upon the aspect angle of the broadcaster to the audience. While the BBG and its surrogate broadcasting services may rest assured that their journalistic integrity remains intact from any governmental influence peddling, this fact is also largely irrelevant to its audience.<sup>49</sup>

Henry Kissinger recounts in *Diplomacy* how former Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was a firm believer in RFE/RL. Its major purpose "was to keep the principles of freedom alive in Eastern Europe while encouraging revolt" against the Soviet Union. The operative theory was that all RFE/RL pronouncements were not "official." But this subtle qualification was lost on the Czechoslovakian and Hungarian freedom fighters who believed the United States would come to their aid if they revolted. The U.S. apparently did not understand how their messages were being interpreted and did nothing when the revolts occurred. The Soviets brutally suppressed the revolts.<sup>50</sup>

Caspar Weinberger described how President Reagan used the "bully pulpit of the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty... to launch an ideological assault on communism and to promote the democratic aspirations" of oppressed Eastern Europeans behind the Iron Curtain.<sup>51</sup> Once again, we cannot expect the target audience of such broadcasts to be sophisticated enough to distinguish the subtleties of "government-sponsored" but unofficial from "official broadcasts" – especially when, as we have already learned, the President is the nation's foremost strategic communicator. Despite this reality, the official "word" is that the Voice of America, with the exception of limited on-air editorials, is not the "official" voice of America. If it isn't, then what is?<sup>52</sup>

Finally, in the effort to build an effective strategic communication architecture, we must repeal section 501 of the 1948 U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act (Smith-Mundt Act). This archaic restriction was enacted to “prohibit domestic dissemination of information intended for foreign consumption.” Smith-Mundt was enacted for a different day when the memory of World War II and aggressive propaganda use by all sides was still fresh. However, it can be easily overcome today by any American citizen with access to the internet. Time and technology have changed the situation.<sup>53</sup>

The ostensible concern by Representatives Howard A. Smith (R-NJ) and Karl E. Mundt (R-SD) was that information intended to “influence” foreign audiences might also be used to influence Americans. Today, this restriction needlessly handicaps dissemination of information about U.S. generosity, as the Djerejian Commission learned during its investigation. When the Commission asked the Administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) how much of his budget goes to public diplomacy, the answer was “almost none” in compliance with the general prohibitions against publicizing its achievements and expenditures. Unfortunately, as a result, the citizens of Cairo, Egypt, are unaware that the United States funded vital infrastructure upgrades to “their sewer, drinking water, and electrical systems [and] reduced infant mortality” while the Japanese are held in high regard for building the opera house in Cairo. These AID accomplishments exemplify the best of American values and clearly link actions with words, yet most recipients of this American largesse in Cairo were ignorant of these accomplishments.<sup>54</sup>

While winning the “war of ideas” cannot be reduced to a popularity contest, our laws should permit the United States to tell its recipients and its own citizens, whose taxes fund United States overseas aid, of its accomplishments and not leave the field to our opponents to drag our good name through the mud because we cannot defend it.

### Conclusion

Secretary Gates succinctly specified the purpose of our nation’s strategic communication program when he lamented our inability to adequately portray “what we are about as a society and a culture, about freedom and democracy, about our policies and our goals.” He correctly observed that America’s use of soft power has grievously declined over the years.

As a nation, we can and must do better in conveying who we are to the rest of the world by means of the images we project and the policies we enact. Our objective must be to reach foreign audiences at an almost unconscious level to effect changes in their attitudes and perceptions of the United States. Ultimately, we should be able to change attitudes from hostile to appreciative and correct current anti-Americanism into a global posture that welcomes American policies, trade, support, and people.

This will require a careful restructuring of our strategic communication apparatus to integrate words with actions into all aspects of our foreign policy. This enormous task cannot be left to a sub-Cabinet official, no matter how well-intentioned. Likewise, carrying out this task will require institutional changes enhanced by an overarching policy construct to guide this generational struggle.

An effective strategic communication policy and its execution must originate from and be integrated into the highest level of our government within the Executive Office of

the President. How we perceive and how we are perceived by the rest of the global community is too important to allow the well-meaning but disparate efforts of the various departments and agencies to work their own lanes without first achieving unity of effort.

Effective strategic communication demands the careful integration of policy, words, and deeds. Equally important is the issue of resources: Certainly throwing money at the problem without an effective organizational construct is fruitless. What gets funded is what counts. Yet the entire BBG and Public Diplomacy annual budget amounts to less than what the DoD spends to fight the war in Iraq for one week.

Failure to legislatively enact the requisite changes to harness the power of all organs of soft power such as our broadcasting arms means we will continue to muddle through without a strategy. As a result, instead of our broadcasting arm being part of an orchestra, it has, with the permission of Congress, chosen to play solo instead. This battle we are engaged in is really a long war: We must organize, plan, and execute it effectively if we are to secure a better peace.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Hearing of the Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, *Strategic Communications and Comparative Ideas: Winning the Hearts and Minds in the Global War Against Terrorism* (Witness - Linton Wells II, PH.D., Distinguished Research Fellow, Force Transformation Chair), 110 Cong., 2d Session, 11 July 2007. Hereafter cited as *Strategic Communications and Comparative Ideas: Winning the Hearts and Minds in the Global War Against Terrorism*.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Jeryl C. Ludowese, *Strategic Communication: Who Should Lead the Long War of Ideas?*, Strategy Research Project (Carlisle Barracks: U.S. Army War College, 2006), 7. U.S. Government Accountability Office, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department and Broadcasting Board of Governors Expand Post – 9/11 Efforts but Challenges Remain* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Accountability Office, 23 August 2004), 9. In 2004, State Dept. officials responded to Government Accounting Office inquiries about the absence of a national communication strategy by noting "...the lack of a strategy diminishes the efficiency and effectiveness of government-wide public diplomacy efforts."

<sup>4</sup> Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy Policy Coordinating Committee, *U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication* (Washington, D.C.: National Security Council, 11 July 2007), 33. Here after cited as the *National Communication Strategy*. The GAO also noted the under funding of even U.S. Embassy public diplomacy efforts in its 2006 report entitled U.S. Government Accountability Office, *State Department Efforts Lack Certain Communication Elements and Face Persistent Challenges* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Accountability Office, 3 May 2006), 2.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Army War College, *Information Operations Primer*, AY08 (Carlisle Barracks: U.S. Army War College, Department of Military Strategy, Planning, and Operations, December 2007); and Bruce Gregory, *Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication: Cultures, Firewalls, and Imported Norms*, Presented to the American Political Science Association Conference on International Communication and Conflict (Washington D.C.: George Washington University, 31 August 2005), 6. Gregory notes there is still considerable disagreement among communication professionals about the differences between public diplomacy and strategic communication.

<sup>6</sup> Karen Hughes, *The Mission of Public Diplomacy*, testimony before U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, 22 July 2005. At least Ms. Hughes lasted longer than her predecessor, Margaret Tuttwieiller. Hughes stayed barely two years while Tuttwieiller departed in frustration after only five months. Tuttwieiller's predecessor was Charlotte Beers, whose stay was barely 1.5 years!

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operation Planning, Joint Publication 5-0* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 26 December 2006), GL-22; and U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States, Joint Publication 1.0* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 14 May 2007), I-9. This publication adds that the "U.S. Government uses Strategic Communication to provide top-down guidance relative to using the informational instrument of national power in specific situations and it is used with defense support to public diplomacy and military diplomacy efforts activities to implement a holistic strategic communication effort."

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 6 February 2006), 91-92.

<sup>9</sup> Colonel Wally Walters, "OSD Strategic Communication," lecture, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 8 November 2007, cited with permission of Col. Walters. Also Carnes Lord, "The State Department: Back to the Future," in *Losing Hearts and Minds?: Public Diplomacy and Strategic Influence in the Age of Terror* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006): [database on-line]; available from Praeger Publications; accessed 5 September 2007. Lord briefly discusses the brief tenure of Charlotte Beers and her successor, Margaret Tuttwiler's brief stay at the position as well.

<sup>10</sup> *National Communication Strategy*, 7; and, U.S. Ambassador William Bodde (Ret.), interview by author, 3 November 2007, Washington, D.C. Ambassador William Bodde also underscored the importance of telling America's story about good deeds to positively influence foreign audiences during the Vietnam War period. He noted that messages and themes don't matter if the "product" you are selling isn't any good.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Halloran, "Strategic Communication," *Parameters* 37 (Autumn 2007): 10. Halloran expertly notes the importance of deeds or actions as an essential component of

strategic communication and our concomitant failure to do so while performing humanitarian actions such as the 2004 tsunami relief operations in Indonesia or engineering efforts in Honduras.

<sup>12</sup> *Strategic Communications and Comparative Ideas: Winning the Hearts and Minds in the Global War Against Terrorism*.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Townsend, ed., "Peoples War," in *The Oxford History of Modern War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 184. The original quote is the 1920 issue of the British Army Quarterly. Lawrence also suggested the gradual success of the insurgents, publicized by successful propaganda, would build up and sustain demand for freedom.

<sup>16</sup> Director of National Intelligence, "Letter from Abu Musab al-Zawahiri to [Al-Qaeda in Iraq chief] al-Zarqawi," 9 July 2005; available from [http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/20051011\\_release.htm](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20051011_release.htm); Internet; accessed 11 August 2007. (Translation released by Director of National Intelligence on 11 October 2005.) Michael Doran's remark was contained within James Glassman's opening statement to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 30 January 2008 for his consideration as the next Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.

<sup>17</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, "New Realities in the Media Age: A Conversation with Donald Rumsfeld," 17 February 2006; available from: <http://www.cfr.org/publication/9900/>; Internet; accessed 11 August 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Greg Grant, "Let Soldiers blog, post YouTube videos, general says," *Government Executive.com*, 30 January 2008 [journal on-line]; available from [http://www.govexec.com/story-page.cfm?articleid=391668dcn=e\\_gvet](http://www.govexec.com/story-page.cfm?articleid=391668dcn=e_gvet); Internet; accessed 2 February 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Joint Military Intelligence College, *Global War on Terrorism: Analyzing the Strategic Threat* (Washington D.C.: Joint Military Intelligence College, November 2004), 120.

<sup>21</sup> Devrimici Sol, available from <http://www.xs4all.nl/~ozgurluk/dhkc1.html>; Internet, accessed 27 March 1996. Video presence was verified at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LglxoBZ8rnu>. Discussions with the former Embassy Regional Security Officer on 8 February 2008 revealed that it took an order by Secretary of State Colin Powell before State Department's unclassified networks were permitted to access the Internet.

<sup>22</sup> "A World Wide Web of Terror," *The Economist*, 14 July 2007; available from [http://www.economist.com/world/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=9472498](http://www.economist.com/world/displaystory.cfm?story_id=9472498); Internet; accessed 2 February 2008.

<sup>23</sup> Gordon Corera, "Al-Qaeda's 007," *The Times OnLine*, 16 January 2008 [journal on-line]; available from [http://women.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life\\_and\\_style/women/the\\_way\\_we\\_live/](http://women.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/women/the_way_we_live/)

article319151.htm; Internet; accessed 16 January 2008. Related information is available from the 14 July 2007 issue of *The Economist*, "A World Wide Web of Terror."

<sup>24</sup> Homeland Security Council, *National Strategy for Homeland Security* (Washington, D.C.: Executive Office of the President, October 2007), 21.

<sup>25</sup> Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller, Director General of the United Kingdom Security Service (MI-5), "The International Terrorist Threat to the UK," Speech at Queen Mary's College, London, U.K., 9 November 2006; available from <http://www.mi5.gov.uk/textonly/page374.html>; Internet; accessed 13 September 2007; and, New York Police Department, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat* (New York: New York Police Department, 2007), 8.

<sup>26</sup> Shaun Waterman (UPI), "Press, Political Pressure Helped 'Lose' Fallujah, Report Says," *Washington Times*, 2 January 2008, p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Noah Shachtman, "How Technology Almost Lost the War: In Iraq, the Critical Networks Are Social – Not Electronic," *WIRED*, 27 November 2007; available from [http://www.wired.com/politics/security/magazine/15-12/ff\\_futurewar.htm](http://www.wired.com/politics/security/magazine/15-12/ff_futurewar.htm); Internet; accessed on 20 January 2008; and, J. Michael McConnell, Director of National Intelligence, "Annual Threat Assessment of the Director of National Intelligence," Statement for the Record - Senate Armed Services Committee, 27 February 2007; available from [http://www.dni.gov/testimonies/20070227\\_testimony.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/testimonies/20070227_testimony.pdf); Internet; accessed 20 January 2008.

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Defense Science Board, *Report of the Defense Science Board on Strategic Communication* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Defense Science Board, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, 4 January 2008). Comments contained within task force chairman's transmittal memorandum dated 17 December 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, "New Realities in the Media Age: A Conversation with Donald Rumsfeld."

<sup>30</sup> Captain H. E. Pittman, Acting Director, DoD SCIG Secretariat, "DoD Strategic Communication Integration Group (SCIG) Update," memorandum for the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Washington, D.C., 20 September 2007. The memo declared the SCIG would be abolished on 1 October 2007 and a new organization (possibly named Communication Integration Group) established to perform its mission.

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee on Intelligence, *Current and Projected National Security Threats*, 110<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d Sess., 5 February 2008. Senator Christopher Bond (R-MO) was providing his opening remarks to the hearing and commented that the Dept. of State and unnamed other agencies, had the responsibility for "winning hearts and minds." He commended a Missouri U.S. Army National Guard unit for its actions in the Philippines for its agricultural assistance to local farmers.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Nomination Hearing of James Glassman to be Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs – Opening Statement of James K. Glassman*, 110<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d Sess., 30 January 2008, 3. Hereafter cited as *Nomination Hearing of James Glassman*; and, Karen Hughes, *The Mission of Public Diplomacy*, testimony before U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, 22 July 2005.

<sup>33</sup> *National Communication Strategy*, 2.

<sup>34</sup> *Nomination Hearing of James Glassman*, 3; and, Karen Hughes, *The Mission of Public Diplomacy*, testimony before U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, 22 July 2005.

<sup>35</sup> S. Nelson Drew, ed., *NSC-68 - Forging the Strategy of Containment* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, Institute for National Strategic Studies, September 1994), 16.

<sup>36</sup> U.S. Office of Management and Budget, "Summary and Highlights – International Affairs – Function 150," in *Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2008* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2008) 1. The \$12 billion number for monthly military operations is commonly used by Senator Barack Obama during his speeches.

<sup>37</sup> U.S. Defense Science Board, *Report of the Defense Science Board on Strategic Communication*, Executive Summary xiii.

<sup>38</sup> Edward P. Djerejian, *Changing Minds Winning Peace: A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab & Muslim World*, Report of the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World (Washington, D.C.: Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, 1 October 2003), 13. One positive aspect about this commission is that James K. Glassman, recently appointed to fill the Under Secretary of State for Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy, also served on the Djerejian Commission.

<sup>39</sup> Carnes Lord, "Strategic Influence and Soft Power," in *Losing Hearts and Minds?: Public Diplomacy and Strategic Influence in the Age of Terror* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006): [database on-line]; available from Praeger Publications; accessed 5 September 2007.

<sup>40</sup> Mark M. Lowenthal, *Intelligence: From Secrets to Policy* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2006), 40.

<sup>41</sup> Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), "The Quest for Reform" in *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Effort*, Phase 2 Report, (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 2005), 26; available from [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/bgn\\_ph2\\_report.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/bgn_ph2_report.pdf); Internet; accessed 3 February 2008. Also see Captain H. E. Pittman, Acting Director, DoD SCIG Secretariat, "DoD Strategic Communication Integration Group (SCIG) Update," memorandum for the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Washington, D.C., 20 September 2007. The memo declared the SCIG would be abolished on 1 October 2007 and a new organization (possibly named Communication Integration Group) established to perform its mission.

<sup>42</sup> Pittman, "DoD Strategic Communication Integration Group (SCIG) Update," memorandum. The memo recommended the establishment of an Under Secretary or Assistant Secretary but then wisely concluded such a position with regulatory underpinning was not feasible during the length of time remaining in the current administration. Also, Christopher J. Castelli, "PENTAGON TERMINATES STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INTEGRATION GROUP," *Inside the Pentagon*, 6 March 2008. In fact, the SCIG's charter was not renewed in March 2008 and the organization was replaced by a less formal organization to do communication integration and planning. This article contains further detail about the

termination of the SCIG and explains some of the rationale behind the decision which includes a concern that the Pentagon was “too fixated” on “strategic” and failing to recognize that the distinctions between tactical to operational to strategic are almost too difficult to discern in the modern communications environment.

<sup>43</sup> Carnes Lord, “Preface,” in *Losing Hearts and Minds?: Public Diplomacy and Strategic Influence in the Age of Terror* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006); [database on-line]; available from Praeger Publications; accessed 5 September 2007; Dennis M. Murphy and James F. White, “Propaganda: Can a Word Decide a War?” *Parameters* 37 (Autumn 2007): 22-23. Both sources review the open hostility with which efforts to manage the media are met by not only the media, but in the case of DoD’s now-defunct Office of Strategic Influence, by official elements too. Whatever the new organization that should be situated within the Executive Office of the President is called, it should re-absorb the State Department Intelligence and Research (INR) Bureau’s Office of Foreign Opinion and Media Research. This INR office was “purloined” from the defunct USIA when it was merged with the State Department during the mid-1990’s.

<sup>44</sup> Carnes Lord, “Introduction,” in *Losing Hearts and Minds?: Public Diplomacy and Strategic Influence in the Age of Terror* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006); [database on-line]; available from Praeger Publications; accessed 5 September 2007.

<sup>45</sup> Colin L. Powell, *State Department: An Independent Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: Foreign Affairs Council, November 2004), Section IX – Public Diplomacy.

<sup>46</sup> Carnes Lord, “Introduction;” and, Juliana Geran Pilon, *Obsolete Restrictions on Public Diplomacy Hurt U.S. Outreach and Strategy*, Backgrounder No. 2089 (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 3 December 2007), 5. Both Smith and Mundt were Republicans who remembered how effective President Wilson’s use of propaganda had been to drum up support among Americans for World War I. They enacted the Smith-Mundt Act to prevent the future use of taxpayer funds to “brainwash voters” for the benefit of one party or another.

<sup>47</sup> Broadcasting Board of Governors, *Marrying the Mission to the Market: Strategic Plan 2002-2007* (Washington, D.C.: Broadcasting Board of Governors, 2002) 4; available from [http://www.bbg.gov/reports/bbg\\_strategic\\_plan.pdf](http://www.bbg.gov/reports/bbg_strategic_plan.pdf); Internet, accessed 3 February 2008.

<sup>48</sup> Djerejian, 32; and, Gregory, 15. Gregory was equally critical of this “firewall” phenomenon in public broadcasting in his remarks to the APSA’s Conference on International Communication and Conflict in August 2005 when he noted that “Government broadcasters are best known for using (and abusing) the firewall metaphor to protect their credibility and journalistic integrity.”

<sup>49</sup> Broadcasting Board of Governors, *FY 2007 Performance and Accountability Report* (Washington, D.C.: Broadcasting Board of Governors, 15 November 2007), 3; available from [http://www.bbg.gov/bbg\\_final\\_par\\_to\\_omb\\_15nov07.pdf](http://www.bbg.gov/bbg_final_par_to_omb_15nov07.pdf); Internet; accessed 3 February 2008. The BBG umbrella organization views its role as a “firewall” to protect journalists from “those who would seek to influence news coverage.”

<sup>50</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 554.

<sup>51</sup> Caspar A. Weinberger, *In The Arena: A Memoir of the 20th Century* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2001), 285.

<sup>52</sup> Todd Leventhal, Department of State, Policy Office for International Information Programs, telephone interview by author, 30 January 2008; and, Bruce Sherman, Director of Strategic Planning for the Broadcasting Board of Governors, telephone interview by author, 30 January 2008. The Voice of America periodically has brief on-air editorials which purport to be “official” U.S. Government statements.

<sup>53</sup> Pilon, 1.

<sup>54</sup> Djerejian, 20, 66.

